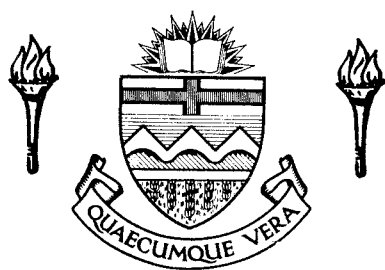


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THE GOSSAMER THREAD

With a Foreword

by

The Rt. Rev. W. W. H. Thomas, D.D.
Bishop of Brandon

RELATED BY KATHLEEN BLANCHARD

For the Women's Guild of All Saints Church,
Winnipeg, Canada

FOREWORD

BY

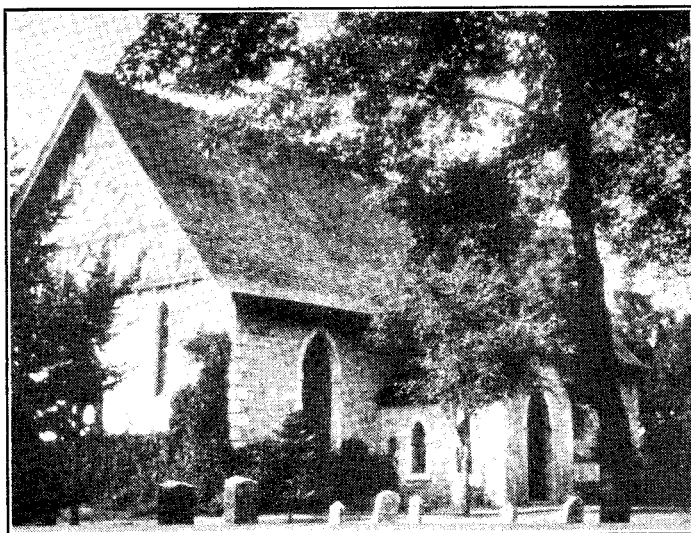
THE BISHOP OF BRANDON

*It affords me great pleasure to write a short
forword to this little story simply and briefly told.
It was while the good Bishop was living in retire-
ment, and very shortly before his death, that he
related to me the reminiscence which now finds the
light of day in the pages of this little book. Inasmuch
as I was charged by the Bishop to keep the story
alive and to make it known, I now owe to the writer
a debt of much gratitude for fulfilling his wish in
this commendable form. I earnestly hope that it
may help to bring back to recollection some memories
of one who loved to spend himself for others, and
who in turn was loved by all.*

WILFRID BRANDON.

*Bishop's Lodge,
February 18, 1937.*

2643478



Old St. John's, Winnipeg

*"And memory gently takes our hand
And leads us by a silken strand
To recollections' pool."*

—K. Blanchard

THE GOSSAMER THREAD

It was a festive night at our Parish Hall in Winnipeg. We had gathered from far and near to hear an address by the newly consecrated Bishop of Brandon. We knew what a good speaker the Bishop was, and the story he told us was so remarkable that it is worth recording.

"When I was Archdeacon," began the Bishop, "I was living very near to Bishop Grisdale. One morning early, the telephone was insistently ringing. I hastened from my bed to answer it. It was Bishop Grisdale's nurse, who said, 'Will you come over as soon as you can, the Bishop has something to tell you?' Replying that I would come at once, I dressed hastily and was soon there.

"The Bishop was obviously pleased I had come, and said at once: 'My dear Archdeacon, I sent for you early

as I feel that I have not much longer to live and I have been dreaming and thinking during the night of a strange story of coincidence which I experienced years ago, and which I had forgotten—until my dreams brought them all back to my memory.

“‘I want you to take what I have to say in writing, and when I am gone to pass it on to the world.

“‘Years ago, when I was Dean of Ruperts’ Land, I made it a practice to go to the General Hospital every Friday morning and to go the rounds of the wards there. On one of my visits I was told by one of the nurses that a young Englishman who was very ill wished to see me as soon as I arrived.

“‘I went at once to his ward and I saw that the poor fellow was indeed very ill, and that his sickness was unto death. He roused himself however and asked, “Sir, will you do something for me?” I at once replied, “My dear boy, I will do anything you ask me to do, that I can do for you.” The young man then said in a low voice, “I feel that I shall never see my home again, and I want you to take down the address of my mother in the Old Country, and when I am dead write to her and say you saw me.” Having certain small personal articles, he asked that I would send her these.

“‘I assured him that I would do so, and immediately noted the name and address of the boy’s mother and the messages. I then prayed with him, and after a little, left him and went on my way. I asked the nurse to let me know how he was and to keep in touch with me at my home.

“‘I did not go straight home that morning and was later than usual getting back, when I did so I found a message from the Hospital waiting for me. The young man I had seen that morning had passed on soon after I left.

“‘I felt very touched by the sad incident of the day and determined that I would do all I could. As I was Dean I had the privilege of choosing any plot of ground for a burial. I chose a spot not far from the east window—under a tree—and arranged for the body to be brought down to

St. John's. I buried him there. The day was beautiful, and after I had taken the burial I gathered some leaves from the tree over the grave and enclosed them in a letter to his mother, telling her all about the incident, as I had promised.

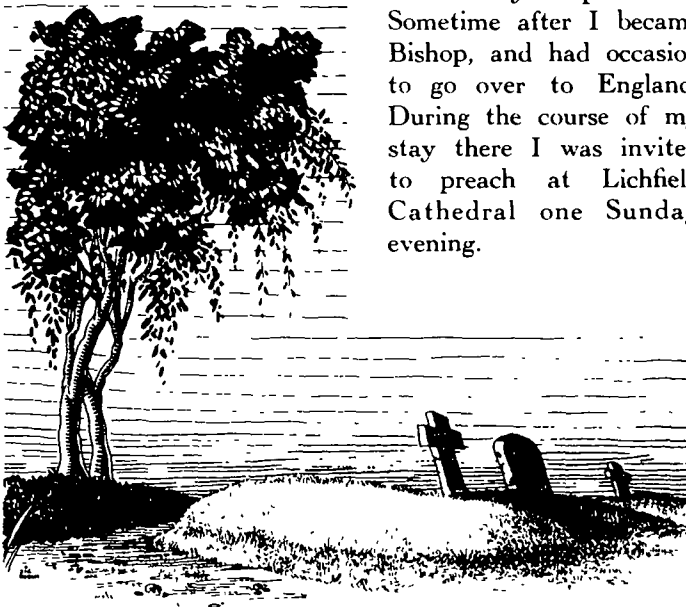
" 'In due time I had a letter from his mother thanking me for all I had done, and enclosing to me the sum of twenty pounds with which to put up a small stone in the form of a cross, and asking me to put the following inscription upon it:

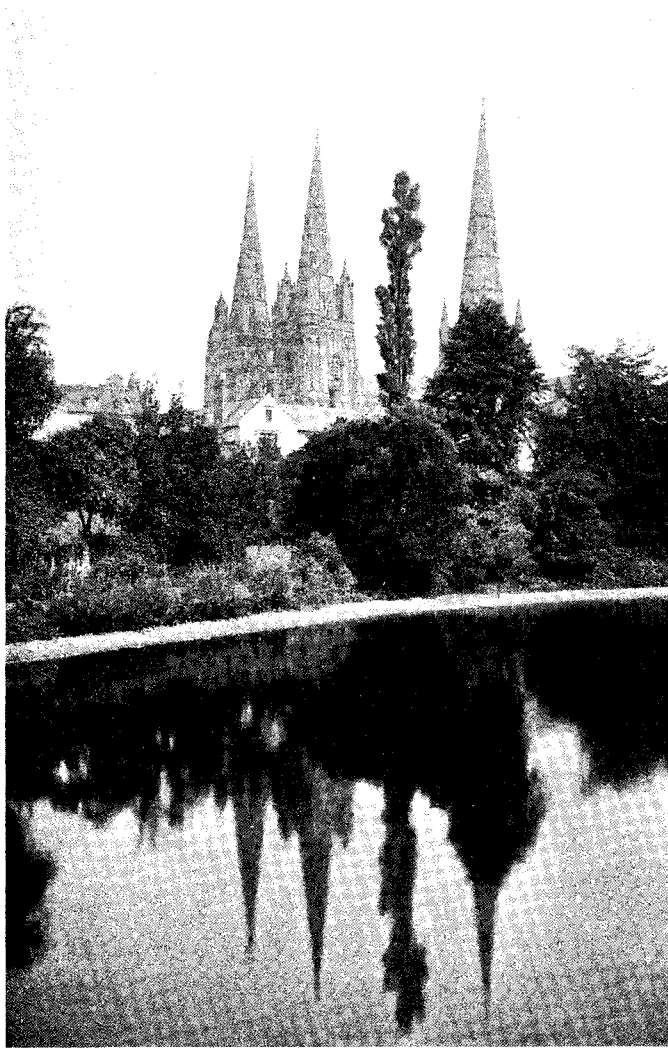
" 'Name—— When Born—— When Died—— and the following verse: "He brought me forth also into a place of liberty." *Psalm 18, verse 19.*

" 'Now I was much struck as to the reason his mother had chosen this particular line—as it was very unusual, and I pondered over it quite often.

" 'However, it was all done as requested and the stone was put up. I often looked at it when I was passing through the churchyard—and wondered.

" 'The years passed on. Sometime after I became Bishop, and had occasion to go over to England. During the course of my stay there I was invited to preach at Lichfield Cathedral one Sunday evening.





LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL, ENGLAND



Interior of Lichfield Cathedral

“The service commenced, and the lovely voices of the choir were singing “He brought me forth also into a place of liberty.” The whole scene of years ago flashed across my mind as the beautiful music rolled around the ancient arches I was transported to the little grave in Winnipeg.

“As I looked round the noble building and at the vast congregation, I saw an old white-haired lady sitting in the front row. She was singing the Psalms of the day.

“The thought flashed through my mind, “Could that possibly be the mother of the young man I had met years before?” I was determined after the service to ask someone who she was.

“However my duties as preacher took these thoughts out of my head and I thought no more about it just then. While I was disrobing, however, there was a knock at the Vestry door and the vergers announced that a lady would like to speak to me. I knew at once who my visitor was. It was the old lady I had seen at the service!

“She said, “I wish to thank you personally, sir, for what you did for my son. You did the kindest deed one man could do for another. You fulfilled his last wishes, and buried him with love and kindness.” We had a little chat,

and parted, and soon afterwards I returned to Canada and my work.

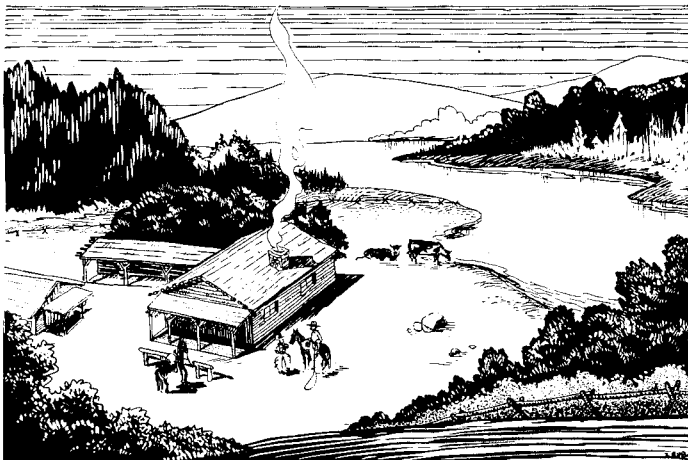
“ ‘While going the rounds of my vast Diocese*, I was preaching one Sunday morning in a small country town. The Incumbent was going out in the afternoon to take the service at a big ranch some miles away. He very much wanted me to go with him, as he said the cowboys would appreciate seeing me, even if I gave them only a little talk.

“ ‘I was very tired, but consented to go. I enjoyed the drive out despite the bumpy roads and other discomforts. As we journeyed along I turned over in my mind what I would say to them on arrival.

“ ‘At last we were there, the men were all assembled and the service had begun. Once again the singing commenced. Being the third day of the month, they came to the verse “He brought me forth also into a place of liberty!” Which as they sang, seemed to take volume and roll around me until the air was full of music.

“ ‘I was spellbound. There and then I decided that I would say nothing of what I had prepared, but I commenced

*Qu’Appelle—90,000 square miles.



telling them of the singular coincidence of that particular verse of the Psalms and of all it reminded me of.

“ ‘After the service was over, I was sitting on the verandah of the ranch, pondering over the happenings of the day, when the owner came up to speak to me, and said, “That strange coincidence that you were telling us of, was even stranger than you thought, sir, for it was from this house he was taken to the hospital, and it was to this house he first came to from England!”

“ ‘And this was the singular end of my strange experience—it had followed me to its conclusion.’

Stranger indeed than fiction—like a gossamer thread.

How Qu'Appelle Got Its Name

An Indian Legend

There was once a great Indian Chief, who possessed a lovely and accomplished daughter. This Indian maiden was sought in marriage by many Indian braves. But there was only one she really loved, and he had not distinguished himself in any particular way, but one day he ventured to approach the Chief and ask for his daughter's hand.

The old man said, that a Chief could not give his daughter in marriage to one who had not shown his skill and bravery, but he would give him a test, which if fulfilled, he could then claim the maiden. He told the young man to make a journey, alone, into their enemy's country, and bring back a certain number of scalps taken by his own hand; he could then marry his daughter.

The young man thought very little of the risk to his own life, accepted the conditions, and after an affectionate farewell to his beloved he started on his perilous journey; his weapons were a bow and arrow and a tomahawk. Being singlehanded, he was cunning, and had to resort to concealment, and way-lay the stray members of their band.

This he did, and at last procured the number of scalps asked for by his Chief. And now after some months of doing this he started on his return journey.

When he arrived at the place he had left, he found that the Chief had pitched his tents some way down the river. So having been able to borrow a birch-bark canoe from another Indian, he started paddling upstream in search of the camp.

The day was half over before he started, and as he was anxious to reach his destination he continued on during the night. About midnight he came to a part of the river which was thickly wooded either side, and the darkness was intense.

Whilst enveloped in this intense gloom he heard a voice calling from out of the woods, and he stopped paddling and called out "O-wan-na-ka-tap-wat?" (Who calls?) But as he heard nothing he began to paddle again, but no sooner

was this done than the voice called to him again, and the voice was the voice of his beloved. He put ashore and enquired earnestly who it was, and what was wanted; but alas, no further sound came, and after three interruptions he continued his journey in silence.

At daybreak he arrived, secured his canoe to a tree, ascended the banks, and saw the tents in the distance. As he approached the camp he heard signs of weeping. As he got closer he saw signs of mourning in the Chief's tent, and his heart felt faint. Still he went on, and coming to the tent squatted down, as the custom was in the presence of death. Then he rose and going over to the Chief shook hands with him, and presented the tail of scalps.

The old man was unable to speak for emotion, pointed to the screen, and the young man knew the worst.

After giving way to violent weeping, in which they all joined, he asked the chief what time his loved one ceased to breathe, and if in her last hours she remembered him.

The Chief answered, "Last night just as the moon rose her spirit left her, and just before she died she mentioned your name three times and called for you to come quickly to her "

The young man then related his experiences of the river—how he had heard the voice three times --and then it was understood by all that her Spirit was in the woods until it should enter the Spirit-world after her body was buried.

The brave young hero then shook hands with the Chief and friends, lifted the screen and kissed his beloved, then descending the banks of the river, entered his canoe and paddled back to the place where he heard the voice calling him. Then plunged into the waters, that his Spirit might accompany the Spirit of the departed into the Spirit-world.

Hence the Indians called it "O-wa-na-ka-tap-wat oo-se-pe." "The River of One Who Calls," or "Who Calls River." French traders couldn't pronounce this, so they, having learnt the meaning, called it, 'Qu'Appelle"—which Means "Who Calls?"



